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SUBJECT: Lebanon: Special Media Reaction: Secretary Rice's
Visit to Lebanon, June 20, 2008

Atmospherics:

Despite the press' preoccupation with the complexities blocking formation of the government, the media continued to give top billing to the Shebaa Farms issue. The press underscored that it is not only the subject of American interest but international and Arab interest as well. The press observed that the French President will discuss Shebaa Farms during his upcoming visit to Israel on Sunday, and noted that President Mubarak intends to discuss it as well with Israeli Prime Minister Olmert when they meet next week in Sharm El-Sheikh. Several newspapers also front-paged the meeting that took place between Secretary Rice and U.N. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, claiming that she gave him "the green light" to begin working on this issue.

In this same context, most media outlets emphasized Hizballah's reaction to this "sudden" interest in the Shebaa Farms. The press noted in particular a statement by one Hizballah MP who said that "getting the Shebaa Farms back from the Zionist occupation will not change the existing formula...which is Lebanon's need for the Resistance. ... Those who think that placing the Shebaa Farms under an international umbrella could put the Resistance under pressure...are delusional."

Block Quotes:

"Hizballah and the Opposition: The Resistance Weapons Will Not Be Subjected to Compromise Even Following the Liberation of the Shebaa Farms" Moderate, anti-Syrian An-Nahar

"Arab-International Activity to Liberate the Farms" Pro-opposition Al-Akhbar

"Cabinet Assembly Shows No Sign of Early Completion,"
English-language, Beirut-based The Daily Star

Block Quotes:

"No Israeli Seriousness and American Naivety," an editorial by Sarkis Naoum in moderate, anti-Syrian An-Nahar (6/20):

"...It is good that President Suleiman said in his inauguration speech that he intends to exert every effort possible to liberate the Shebaa Farms. ...It is also good that he told the delegations who came to congratulate him, that he has additional documents that

prove the Lebanese ownership of the Shebaa Farms. ...As is known, Suleiman raised the issue of the Shebaa Farms before Secretary Rice's surprising visit. ...For this reason he was able to talk with her about this issue with clarity and frankness. ...In this regard, News reports noted that Secretary Rice and her team do not have confidence in the U.N. and do not want to place the Shebaa Farms under UN patronage, but are adamant about finding a way to liberate these Farms. ...It is believed that such an attitude is not helpful and has no value because Secretary Rice and her Administration are leaving their posts soon. ...Olmert is also leaving...and Israel and the U.S. are going to be engrossed with elections. In such atmospheres, there will be no Israeli concessions and no U.S. decisions..."

"Qoureitem: Should We Refuse Israeli Withdrawal from the Shebaa Farms to Avoid being Labeled as Conspiring against the Resistance?" an editorial by Imad Marmal in Arab nationalist As-Safir (6/20):

"...Sources who commented about this new enthusiasm related to liberation of the Shebaa Farms said that Mr. Eliot Abrams, in coordination with the strategic planning office at the State Department, brought the issue of the Shebaa Farms to the surface...because this issue might be the only one the Bush Administration would be able to solve before it leaves. ...Circles close to MP Hariri, however, noted that a lot that was said about Secretary Rice's visit was pure imagination. ...They noted that Secretary Rice only said that her Administration is serious in trying to end the Israeli occupation of the Shebaa Farms. Rice told Hariri, 'you have been asking for three years for the Shebaa Farms...but this time, we are the ones who are asking about this issue and President Bush also discussed it with the Lebanese Ambassador to Washington.' Hariri responded by noting that the issue of the Lebanese prisoners should be dealt with as well. ...Hariri circles wondered over statements that claim that efforts to get Israel to withdraw from the Shebaa farms reflect bad intentions towards Hizballah... These sources asked, if Israel decides to withdraw...do we ask her to stay in Shebaa to avoid being labeled as conspiring against the Resistance? ..."

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